

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 22, 2009

Dr. Raynard S. Kington
Acting Director
National Institutes of Health
Building 1
1 Center Drive, Room 126 MSC0148
Bethesda, MD 10892

Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services
Humphrey Building
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Dr. Kington & Secretary Sebelius:

As supporters of embryonic stem cell research, we are excited that expanded stem cell research efforts will soon commence thanks to Executive Order 13505, signed by President Barack Obama on March 9, 2009, and the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) upcoming final guidelines on human stem cell research. By establishing a predictable framework to guide stem cell research, scientists can confidently pursue the promise of treatments and cures for the most debilitating diseases.

In the face of fragmented state and private research that is currently being undertaken, we recognize the need for strong federal leadership by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in carrying out a responsible stem cell research program in order to realize the full potential for stem cell therapies. The importance of these guidelines must not be diminished, as it is our hope that they would be adopted as the gold standard across the federal government and around the world.

In reviewing the draft guidelines we would like to make the following comments:

We believe that any responsibly derived stem cell lines should be eligible for federal funding, regardless of the date on which they were derived. In order to maximize the scientific research already underway, the NIH must adopt an inclusive policy that would expand and not limit stem cell research; the NIH should develop criteria for determining whether or not lines that are currently in use should continue to be eligible for federal funding.

We support periodic updates to the guidelines by NIH, so that the guidelines will reflect scientific needs and advances for all forms of ethical stem cell research, and encourage the NIH to expressly state that scientifically worthy advances will be addressed in future updates to the guidelines. Important research tools will likely be discovered in the coming years, necessitating that the guidelines be adapted accordingly. Similarly, we believe that the guidelines should specify only which types of stem cell research are currently eligible to receive federal funding.

Medical and scientific research, including embryonic stem cell research, holds great promise for alleviating the suffering of the 100 million American patients who are living with devastating diseases — from Parkinson's disease to spinal cord injuries to diabetes — for which there are no

good treatments or cures. We thank you again for your commitment to advancing the field and for your consideration of our comments as you work to finalize the guidelines for human stem cell research.

Sincerely,

Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

Mike Castle

Michael Castle
Member of Congress

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